



Couleecap • La Crosse County • Catholic Charities

# The Problem

Families with children are not served adequately by existing shelters and housing programs.

Private rental market presents barriers for housing insecure families.

- Area rental vacancy rate consistently lower than national average.
- 44% of La Crosse area renters spending more than 30% of their income on rent.\*

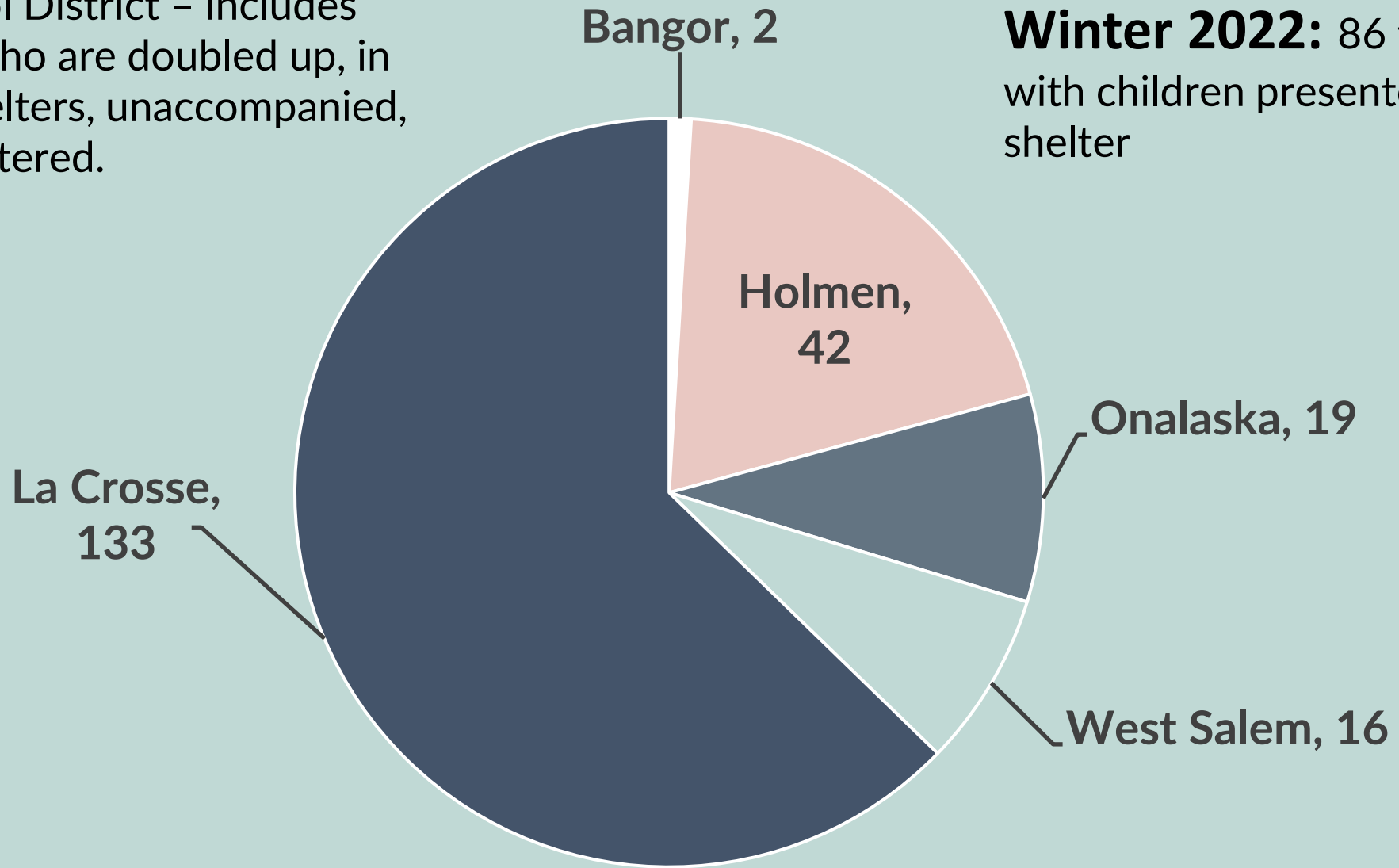


\*2020 Census

# Homeless Students\*

\*Per School District – includes students who are doubled up, in motels, shelters, unaccompanied, and unsheltered.

**Winter 2022:** 86 families with children presented for shelter



# County Task Force

Cross-disciplinary team led by County Administrator to discuss options and develop recommendations.



# What Families Told Us

Traditional shelters & motel programs are not suited for families with children.

Families fleeing domestic violence prefer to live near other families for safety.

Scattered-site system allows families to stay in their school district of choice.

Case management and ongoing support is critical.



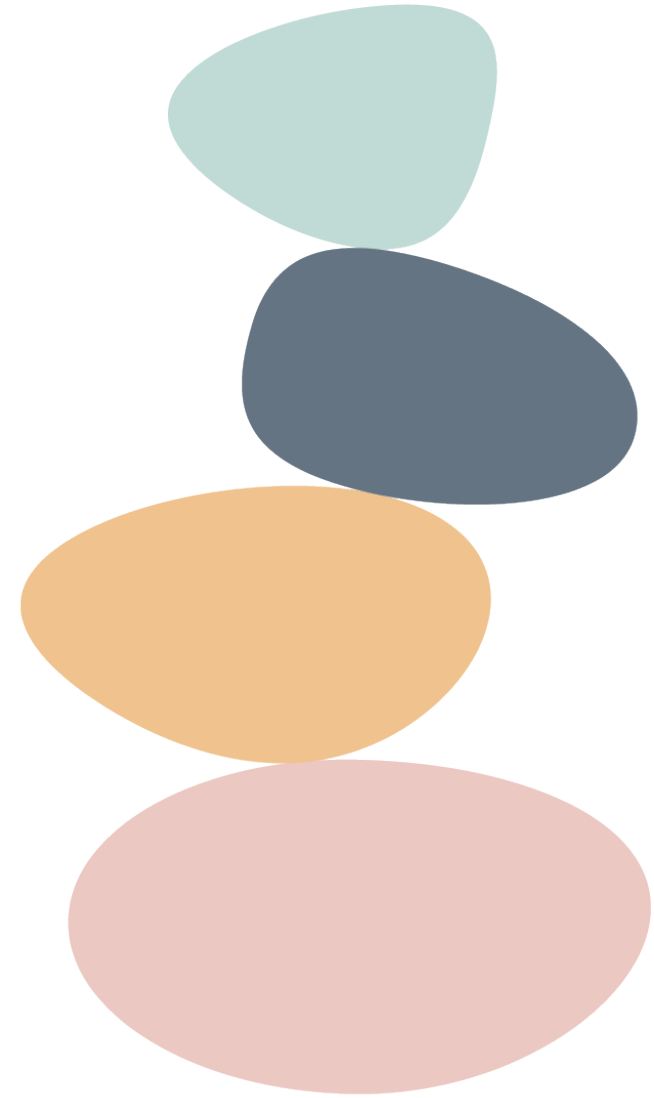
# What Providers Told Us

Many families were already working with a case worker.

Most families had a source of income, would qualify for housing subsidies, or could access income with the right support.

Nonprofit housing providers could provide low-barrier, supportive housing with flexible rent if the cost to operate was low.

Bridge housing would enable families the time they needed to secure permanent housing.





A bridge housing program that enables families to achieve personal, financial, and permanent housing goals.

# Experience

- Catholic Charities and Couleecap: experienced property managers.
  - Procedures, leases, and processes in place.
  - Frequently work with low-income tenants, families, and individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Family Collaborative: family social workers.
  - Already providing case management to housing-insecure families.
  - Partners with housing agencies.



**Thriving** Families, **Thriving** Communities



# How does it work?...in a nutshell.

\$3.0 million granted from La Crosse County to nonprofits Couleecap and Catholic Charities to purchase ~16 scattered-site housing units.

Nonprofits own and operate the properties as the landlord.

La Crosse County Family Collaborative refers families and provides case mgmt.

Family lives in the home for up to two years as they work towards a goal of obtaining permanent housing.

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# Acquisition Goals

- 2–4-bedroom properties @ \$150K/unit or less
  - Single-family, Du- or Triplex properties
- Repair or rehabilitate where needed @ \$25,000 or less
  - Cost/benefit
  - Security measures
- Scatter locations throughout La Crosse County
  - Housing needs in each community
  - Availability will be a factor

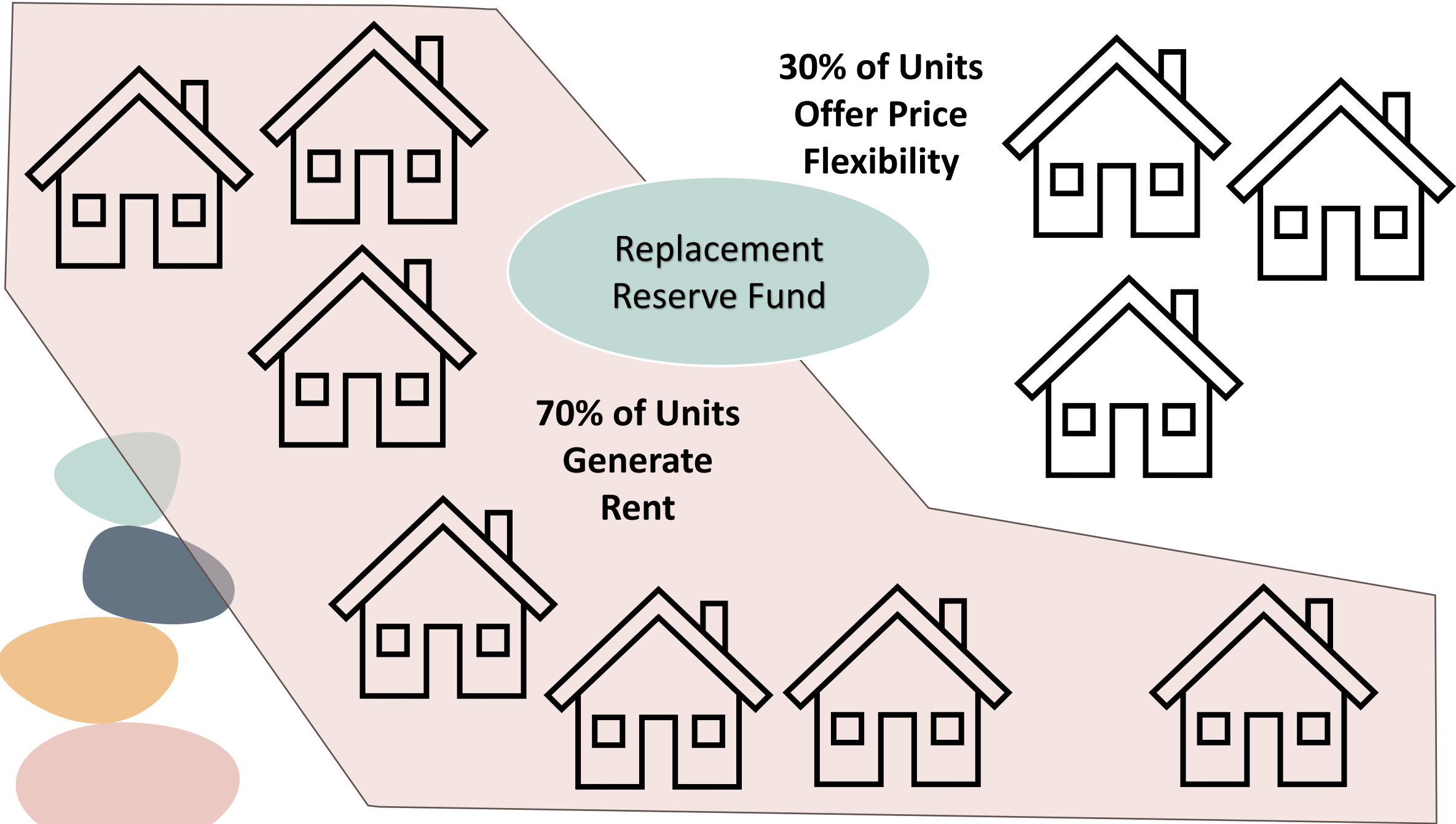
# Roles

## Property Management

- Couleecap and Catholic Charities manage multiple houses/units.
- One program will include units at 0-100% fair market rent.
- No application process needed.
- Property manager handles maintenance and general management.

## Case Management

- County case management team works with families to determine readiness, fit, income, etc.
- Case Manager (CM) makes referrals when units are available.
- Ongoing support for families
- Goal: Families are ready to move to permanent housing within 24 months.



# Tenant Selection

- Rental Committee (LAFC, Couleecap, Catholic Charities)
- Confidential process
  - Referral form sent with basic household information but no names or identifying information
- Committee meets to discuss best fit for unit
- Unit tour scheduled with case manager, potential tenant and Couleecap
- Agree to follow the Family Partnership Agreement



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# Property management approach

- Lease agreement walk through
- Quarterly check ins with tenant
- Relationship building strategies
  - Communication
  - Prep for future landlord relationships
- All housing costs included in rent
- Provide referrals for other agency programs – financial wellness/housing counseling, education, transportation needs, etc.
- Celebrate their wins

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# Tracking Success

1. Successfully obtain 16 units by year-end 2025 (we are at 11!)
2. Place families in 90 days of purchase or lease end.
3. Families move to permanent housing within 24 months.
4. Re-occupancy within 30 days of vacancy.
5. Properties are maintained and program is financially stable throughout contract period (at least 10 years).
6. Expand the program.



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# Questions?

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Learn more: <https://www.couleecap.org/thriving-families.html>



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